

# THE SIGN AT SIX

STEWART EDWARD WHITE,  
AUTHOR OF  
THE BLAZED TRAIL,  
THE CONJUROR'S HOUSE, ETC., ETC.

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## SYNOPSIS.

Percy Darrow, a young scientist in search of a job, enters the office of "Boss" McCarthy of New York. McCarthy has just been threatened by an anonymous message ordering him to flee to Europe. He does not take the message seriously. Darrow goes up the elevator to try for a position with Dr. Knox. Suddenly the electric apparatus in the Atlas building goes out of business. Experts are unable to locate the trouble. All at once, without apparent reason, electric connections are restored. The next evening McCarthy is warned that unless he leaves at once for Europe a sign will be sent him at six. Promptly at that hour the entire electric apparatus of New York is cut off. Percy Darrow thinks he has a clue. He engages the help of Jack Warford, a college athlete. They visit McCarthy and offer to run down the cause of his mysterious trouble. McCarthy has just received another warning by wireless. At six a deadly stillness falls on the Atlas building, blotting out all sound. Darrow is arrested as he leaves the building. He is undisturbed because he believes he is on the right track and that another portent will appear at six. This time the whole town is thrown into darkness and all hearing suspended under cover of the confusion Darrow escapes from jail. The next morning Darrow and Warford go to McCarthy's office just as the latter gets another warning. Darkness hits the Atlas building in broad daylight.

## CHAPTER XII.—Continued.

"We'll show you all right," said he. He sketched briefly for Halliwell's benefit the reasoning already followed out, and which it is therefore unnecessary to repeat here. "So now," he concluded, "we will consider this hypothesis: that these phenomena are caused by one man in control of a force capable of deadening vibrations in ether and solids within certain definite limits."

"Why do you limit it?" cried Halliwell.

"Because we have had but one manifestation at a time. If this Unknown were out really to frighten—which seems to be his intention—it would be much more effective to visit us with absolute darkness and absolute silence combined. That would be really terrifying. He has not done so. Therefore, I conclude that his power is limited in applicability."

"Isn't that a little doubtful?" spoke up Jack.

"Of course," said Darrow cheerfully. "That's where we're going to win out on this sporting proposition with our dear Brother Eldridge. He won't accept any hypothesis unless it is absolutely copper-riveted. We will."

"I think you underestimate Eldridge," spoke up Halliwell. "He's the only original think-tank in a village of horse troughs."

"I don't underestimate him one bit," countered Darrow; "but we have a head start on him with our reasoning; that's all. He's absolutely sure to come to the conclusions I have just detailed, only he'll get there a little more slowly. That's why I want you in on this thing, Halliwell."

"How's that?"

"We'll publish everything up to date and cut the ground from under him."

"What's your special grudge on Eldridge, anyway?" asked Jack.

"I like to worry him," replied Percy Darrow non-committally.

At that moment the darkness disappeared as though some one had turned a switch. The reporter, the operator and the scientist's young assistant moved involuntarily as though dodging, and blinked. Darrow shaded his eyes with one hand and proceeded as though nothing had happened.

"Here are the exclusive points of your story," he said to Halliwell, handing a sheaf of yellow wireless forms. "I got them in McCarthy's office. They are messages from the unknown wielder of the mysterious power to his enemy, the political boss. There will be plenty who will conclude these messages to be the result of fanaticism, after the fact; that is to say, they will conclude some wireless amateur has taken advantage of natural phenomena and, by claiming himself the author of them, has attempted to use them again his enemy. Of course, the answer to that is that if the Unknown—let's call him Monsieur X—did not cause these strange things, he at least knew enough about them to predict them accurately."

"You just leave that to me," buzzed Halliwell under his breath. The reporter had been glancing over the wireless forms, and his eyes were shining with delight.

"Here is the last one," said Darrow, producing a crumpled yellow paper from his pocket. "I went back after it."

"McCarthy: My patience is at an end. Your last warning will be sent you at nine thirty this morning. If you do not call on the Celtic at noon I shall strike you are of a stubborn and a stiff-necked generation, but I am your lord and master, and my wrath shall be visited on you. Begone, or you shall die the death."

"That bluffed him out," said Darrow, "and I don't blame him. Now, Simmons," said he, turning to the operator, who had sat in utter silence, "how about it? Are you with us, or against us?"

"How do you mean?" demanded Simmons.

"This," said Darrow sharply. "The time has passed for concealment."

Every message through the ether must now reach the public. We must send messages back. The case is out of private hands; it has become important to the people. Will you agree on your honor faithfully to transmit?" He leaned forward, his indolent frame startlingly tense. "Are you afraid of McCarthy?"

"He's been good to me—it's a family matter," muttered the operator.

"Well—" Darrow arose, crossed to the operator, and whispered to him for a moment. "You see the seriousness—you are an intelligent man."

The operator turned pale. "I hadn't thought of that," he muttered. "I hadn't thought of that. Of course I'm with you."

"I thought you would be," drawled Percy Darrow slowly. "If you hadn't decided to be, I'd have had another man put in your place. Hadn't thought of that, either, had you?"

"No, sir," replied Simmons.

"Well, I prefer you. It's no job for a quitter, and I believe you'll stick."

"I'll stick," repeated Simmons.

"Well, to work," said Darrow, lighting the cigarette he had been playing with. "Send this out, and see if you can reach Monsieur X."

"M," he dictated slowly. "Do you get this? Repeat that until you get a reply."

Without comment the operator turned to his key. The long rippling crashes of the wireless sender followed the movements of his fingers.

"I get his T-I," he said, after a moment. "It's almighty faint."

"McCarthy has disappeared. Can no longer reach him with your messages."

"He merely answers T-I," observed the operator.

"By the way," asked Darrow, "what is your shift, anyhow? Weren't you on at night when this thing began?"

"I'm still on at night; but Mr. McCarthy sent me a message, and asked me to stay on all this morning as a personal favor to him."

"I see. Then you're still on at night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, tell Monsieur X that fact, put yourself at his disposal, and tell him he'd better get all his messages to you rather than to the other operators here."

"All right."

"There's your story," said Darrow to Halliwell; "it's in those messages. The scientific aspect will probably be done by somebody for the evening papers. You better concentrate on Monsieur X's connection with McCarthy."

"Say, my friend," said Halliwell earnestly, "do you think I'm a reporter?"



"Here Are the Exclusive Points of Your Story."

for the Scientific American or a newspaper?"

All three rose. The operator was busy crashing away at his Leyden jars.

"What next?" asked Jack.

"That depends on two things."

"Whether or not McCarthy takes the Celtic," interposed Halliwell quickly.

"And whether Monsieur X will be satisfied with his mere disappearance, if he does not take the Celtic," supplemented Darrow. "In any case, we've got to find him. He's unbalanced; he possesses an immense and disconcerting and dangerous power; he is becoming possessed of a manie des grandeurs. You remember the phrasing of his last message? 'I am your lord and master, and my wrath shall be visited on you. Begone!' That is the language of exaltation. Exaltation is not far short of irresponsible raving."

"What possible clue—" began Jack Warford, blankly.

"When a man is somewhere out in the ether there is no clue," replied Darrow.

"Then how on earth can you hope to find him?"

"By the exercise of pure reason," said Darrow calmly.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### Darrow's Challenge.

With a final warning to Simmons as to the dissemination of any information without consulting him, Darrow left the room. Halliwell listened to this advice with unmixed satisfaction; the afternoon papers would not be able to get at his source of information. The reporter felt a slight wonder as to how Darrow had managed his ascendancy over the operator. An inquiry as to that met with a shake of the head.

"I may have to ask your help in that later," was his only reply.

At the corner, after pushing through a curious crowd, the men separated. Halliwell started for the wharf; Jack Warford for home—at Darrow's request. The scientist returned to his own apartments, where he locked himself in and sat for five hours cross-legged on a divan, staring straight ahead of him, doing nothing. At the end of that time he cautiously stretched his legs, sighed, rose, and looked into the mirror.

"I guess you're hungry," he remarked to the image therein.

It was now near mid-afternoon. Percy Darrow wandered out, ate a leisurely meal at the nearest restaurant, and sauntered up the avenue. He paused at a news stand to buy an afternoon paper, glanced at the headlines and a portion of the text, and smiled sweetly to himself. Then he betook himself by means of a bus to the Warford residence.

Helen was at home, and in the library. With her was Professor Eldridge. The men greeted each other formally. After a moment of general conversation Darrow produced the newspaper.

"I see you have your theories in print," he drawled. "Very interesting. I didn't know you'd undertaken grammar-school physics instruction."

"I know I'm going to be grateful for any sort of instruction—from anybody," interposed Helen. "I'm all in the dark."

"Like the Atlas Building," Darrow smiled at her. "Well, here's a very good exposition in words of one syllable. I'll leave you the paper. Professor, what have you concluded as to the causes?"

"They are yet to be determined."

"Pardon me," drawled Darrow, "they have been determined—or at least their controlling power."

"In what way, may I ask?" inquired Professor Eldridge formally.

"Very simply. By the exercise of a little reason. I am going to tell you, because I want you to start fairly with me; and because you'll know all about it in the morning, anyway."

"Your idea—the one you told us yesterday—is to be published?" cried Helen, leaning forward with interest.

"The basis of it will be," replied Darrow. "Now"—he turned to Eldridge—"listen carefully; I'm not going to indulge in many explanations. Malachi McCarthy, political boss of this city, has made a personal enemy of a half-crazed or at least unbalanced man, who has in some way gained a limited power over etheric and other vibrations. This power Monsieur X, as I call him—the Unknown—has employed in fantastic manifestations designed solely for the purpose of frightening his enemy into leaving the country."

Eldridge was listening with the keenest attention, his cold gray eyes glittering frostily behind his lenses.

"You support your major hypothesis, I suppose?" he demanded calmly.

"By wireless messages sent from Monsieur X to McCarthy, in which he predicts or appoints in advance the exact hour at which these manifestations take place."

"In advance, I understand you to say?"

"Precisely."

"The proof is as conclusive for merely prophetic ability as for power over the phenomena."

"In formal logic, not in common sense."

Eldridge reflected a moment further, removing his glasses, with the edge of which he tapped methodically the palm of his left hand. Helen had sunk back into the depths of her armchair, and was watching with immobile countenance but vividly interested eyes the progress of the duel.

"Granting for the moment your major hypothesis," Eldridge stated at last, "I follow your other essential statements. The man is unbalanced because he chooses such a method of accomplishing a simple end."

"Quite so."

"His power is limited because it has been applied to but one manifestation of etheric vibration at a time; and each manifestation has had a defined duration."

Darrow bowed. "You are the only original think-tank," he quoted Halliwell's earlier remark.

"You are most kind to place me in possession of these additional facts," said Eldridge, resuming his glasses, for naturally his conclusions, based on incomplete premises, could hardly be considered more than tentative. The happy accident of an acquaintance with the existence of these wireless messages and this personal enmity gave you a manifest but artificial advantage in the construction of your hypothesis."

"Did I not see you in the corridor of the Atlas Building the day of the first electrical failure?" asked Darrow.

"Certainly."

"Then you had just as much to go on as I did," drawled Darrow, half closing his eyes. The long dark lashes fell across his cheek, investing him in his most harmless and effeminate look.

"I fail to—"

"Yes, you fail, all right," interrupted Darrow. "You had all the strings in your hands, but you were a mile be-

hind me in the solution of this mystery. I'll tell you why: it was for the same reason that you're going to fail a second time, now that once again I've put all the strings in your hands."

"I must confess I fail to gather your meaning," said Professor Eldridge coldly.

"It was for the same reason that always until his death you were inferior to dear old Doctor Schermerhorn as a scientist. You are an almost perfect thinking machine."

Darrow quite deliberately lighted a cigarette, flipped the match into the grate, and leaned back luxuriously. Professor Eldridge sat bolt upright, waiting. Helen Warford watched them both.

"You have no humanity; you have no imagination," stated Darrow at last. "You follow the dictates of rigid science, and of logic."

"Most certainly," Eldridge agreed to this, as to a compliment.

"It takes you far," continued Darrow, "but not far enough. You observe only facts; I also observe men. You will follow only where your facts lead; I am willing to take a leap in the dark. I'll have all this matter hunted out while you are proving your first steps."

"That, I understand it, is a challenge?" demanded Eldridge, touched in his pride of the scientific diagnostician.

"That," said Percy Darrow, blandly, "is a statement of fact."

"We shall see."

"Sure!" agreed Darrow. "Now, the thing to do is to find Monsieur X. I



"You're Going to Fail a Second Time."

don't know whether your curiously scutellate mind has arrived at the point where it is willing to admit the existence of Monsieur X or not; but it will. The man who finds Monsieur X wins. Now, you know or can read in the morning paper every fact I have. Go to it!"

Eldridge bowed formally.

"There's one other thing," went on Darrow in a more serious tone of voice. "You have, of course, considered the logical result of this power carried to its ultimate possibility."

"Certainly," replied Eldridge coldly.

"The question is superfluous."

"It is a conclusion which many scientific minds will come to, but which will escape the general public unless the surmise is published. For the present I suggest that we use our influence to keep it out of the prints."

Eldridge reflected. "You are quite right," said he; and rose to go.

After his departure Helen turned on Darrow.

"You were positively insulting!" she cried, "and in my house! How could you?"

"Helen," said Darrow, facing her squarely, "I maintained rigidly all the outer forms of politeness. That is as far as I will go anywhere with that man. My statement to him is quite just; he has no humanity."

"What do you mean? Why are you so bitter?" asked Helen, a little subdued in her anger by the young man's evident earnestness.

"You never knew Doctor Schermerhorn, did you, Helen?" he asked.

"The funny little old German? Indeed, I did! He was a dear!"

"He was one of the greatest scientists living—and he was a dear! That goes far to explain him—a gentle, wise, child-like, old man—with imagination and a Heaven-seeking soul. He picked me up as a boy, and was a father to me. I was his scientific as-



## HARD TO TRICK MODERN BOY

Cleveland Man Thought He Could Do It, but He Has Altered His Opinion Somewhat.

There are ways of doing things. That is elementary and axiomatic wisdom, and yet people are slow to act upon it. Take the case of the East Cleveland, who has a garden and a small boy, says the Cleveland Plain Dealer. This man said to his wife the other day:

"Emily, we aren't going to have any sweet corn this season if we don't take better care of it. I wish you would persuade Robert to take a morning from his baseball and swimming and get after that corn patch."

"I tried to," sighed the mother, "but he just won't do it."

"Tell him you'll give him a quarter to do it."

"I did. I said just yesterday, 'Robert, if you'll cultivate that corn and get all the weeds out of it by noon I'll give you a quarter to put in your bank.'"

"Oh, pshaw! That's not the way to

do it! Call him in here and I'll fix it. Robert, have you got any sporting blood in you? Will you take a small bet? I'll bet you a quarter you can't get that corn hoed before noon today."

"I got you," says Robert. Then, as a look of triumph spreads over his father's face, he adds: "Have you got any sporting blood in you?"

"I sure have, Robert."

"Then I'll bet you a half dollar you win the bet. I'll be at the office this noon and collect."

The corn isn't hoed yet.

## Profitable British Fisheries.

The British fisheries yield about 2,500,000,000 pounds annually, for which the "ultimate consumers" are believed to pay at least \$125,000,000. In view of the part which herring and other small fishes play in this total, it may be within the truth to estimate the number of fishes caught in an average year by the fishermen of the United Kingdom, at two billion or more. For all Europe this enormous number may be multiplied by three, perhaps by four.

"Oh!" cried Helen. "What a trick!"

"So I think. The discovery was purely theoretic and brought no particular fame or money to Eldridge. It was, as he looked at it, and as the doctor himself looked at it, merely carrying common knowledge to a conclusion. Perhaps it was; but I never forgave Eldridge for depriving the old man of the little satisfaction of the final proof. It is indicative of the whole man. He lacks humanity, and therefore imagination."

"Still, I wish you wouldn't be quite so bitter when I'm around," pleaded Helen, "though I love your feeling for dear old Doctor Schermerhorn."

"I wish you could arrange to get out of town for a little while," urged Darrow. "Isn't there some one you can visit?"

"Do you mean there is danger?"

"There is the potentiality of danger," Darrow amended. "I am almost confident, if pure reason can be relied on, that when the time comes I can avert the danger."

"Almost—" said Helen.

"I may have missed one of the elements of the case—though I do not think so. I can be practically certain when I telephone a man I know—or see the morning papers."

"Telephone now, then. But why 'when the time comes'? Why not now?"

Darrow arose to go to the telephone. He shook his head.

"Let Eldridge do his best. He has always succeeded—triumphantly. Now he will fail, and he will fail in the most spectacular, the most public way possible."

He lifted his eyes, usually so dreamy, so soft brown. Helen was startled at the lambent flash in their depths. He sauntered from the room. After a moment she heard his voice in conversation with the man he had called.

"Halliwell!" he said, "good luck to find you. Did our friend leave on the Celtic? Not sure he didn't sneak off in disguise? I'll trust you to think of everything. Sure! Meet me at Simmons' wireless in half an hour."

Helen heard the click as he hung up the receiver. A moment later he lounged back into the room.

"All right," he said. "My job's done."

"Done!" echoed Helen in surprise. "Either I'm right or I'm wrong," said Darrow. "Every element of the game is now certainly before me. If my reasoning is correct I shall receive certain proof of that fact within half an hour. If it is wrong, then I'm away off, and Eldridge's methods will win if any can."

"What is the proof? Aren't you wildly excited? Tell me!" cried Helen.

"The proof is whether or not a certain message has been received over a certain wireless," said Darrow. "I'll know soon enough. But that is not the question; can not you get out of town for a little while?"

Helen surveyed him speculatively.

"If there is no danger, I can see no reason for it," she stated at length, with decision. "If there is danger you should warn a great many others."

"But if that warning might precipitate the danger?"

"Shall I go or stay?" she demanded, ignoring the equivocation.

Darrow considered.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Remarkable Eye for Detail.

"You know Wigley—great fellow for detail." "He is that. Wigley's the sort of chap that would go and get married and be able afterward to tell you whether it was Mendelssohn, 'Lohengrin,' or 'Tannhauser' he played during the ceremony."—St. Louis Republic.

Gov. McCrery has issued a requisition on the governor of Arkansas for the extradition of L. L. Leek, charged, in Clark county, with complicity in the murder of George M. Hart, the first day of last January. Leek is supposed to be in Desha, Ark. He did not kill Hart, but is accused of being present at the killing, in which several participated.

A bill giving the state insurance commissioner supervision over fraternal insurance companies, will be introduced in the general assembly at the instance of the Railway Mail Clerks' association, which desires to establish an agency of its beneficial organization in Louisville, but finds that the insurance department has no power to license it. R. M. Clark, John McCombs and another member from Louisville, representing the organization, have conferred with Commissioner Clay about the bill.

## GOVERNOR IN NEW MANSION

OCCUPIES THREE ROOMS IN BEAUTIFUL NEW BUILDING AT FRANKFORT.

## MANY CONSTRUCTION DELAYS

Public Reception Announced For Tuesday, January 20—Description of Executive Mansion Occupied By Gov. McCrery.

Western Newspaper Union News Service.

Frankfort, Ky.—Regardless of what has or has not been done by workmen, who are bending every effort to get the beautiful building ready and are now engaged in adding finishing touches, Gov. James B. McCrery, who has shown marked patience over the many construction delays, moved into the new governor's mansion and occupies three rooms.

These rooms are the governor's private bedroom, the room to be occupied by Stenographer O. L. Rozeaman, who will reside in the mansion, and the governor's dining room. The governor's private office and reception room will also be thrown open for use if possible to get the furniture placed. All the fore part of the week the furnishers will be busy hanging draperies, placing rugs and getting rooms in the main part of the building ready. Plumbers, painters and paperhangers still have considerable work to do, and are working with might and main on stairways, doors and general woodwork to get the interior of the miniature White House in presentable shape.

Lou Blythe, Gov. McCrery's Madison county cook, prepared a tempting dinner in honor of the occasion of occupancy Monday, when she got possession of the kitchen's extensive and strictly modern facilities. Larkin Blythe, the executive's coachman, also of Madison county, and an old family servant, was proud of having the honor of driving his distinguished master to the new domicile. Francis B. Douglas, the governor's secretary, will occupy an office where he can meet and greet callers and, in turn, get them in touch with the governor. The public reception room is large and commodious and will be attractively furnished.

Gov. McCrery's bedroom is on the second floor in the northwestern corner of the building, with a fine view of the sweeping space in front of the capitol. There will be a number of guests' rooms in the mansion, all furnished in soft-toned mahogany. Colonial single beds with posts will be a feature of every bedroom. The general type of architecture is imposing Colonial, with enough grandeur and splendor to blend the idea of domesticity with that of such a building's official requirements. The mansion will be thrown open to the members of the general assembly as soon as Gov. McCrery gets in, and the public reception will take place, as announced, next Tuesday.

## Fred W. Bauer Appointed.

Governor McCrery has appointed Fred W. Bauer magistrate in the first district of Mason county to fill the vacancy caused by the death of the late Magistrate William Rosser.

## KENTUCKY CAPITAL NOTES

Heads of Kentucky colleges met here in the office of State Superintendent Barksdale Hamlett and considered two drafts of a bill authorizing the state board of education to give certificates, qualifying the holders to teach in high schools, to graduates of the colleges of the state, if they come up to the standards required by the state board. The state superintendent is given supervisory powers to see that the state standard is maintained. Superintendent Hamlett expressed himself heartily in favor of the bill. After the conference, all, excepting Superintendent Hamlett, went to Lexington to confer with President Barker, of State university. Present at the meetings were Presidents M. B. Adams, of Georgetown college; F. W. Hinit, of Central university; R. H. Crossfield, of Transylvania; W. G. Frost, of Berea; J. L. Clark, of Wesleyan, and McHenry Rhoads, state supervisor of high schools.

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